

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

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Please cancel claim 10 without prejudice or disclaimer.

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11. (Currently Amended) ~~The process according to claim 10~~ A process for the production of a membrane module for filtering a medium, the membrane module having at least one ceramic filter element with rod ends, the rod ends being clamped by covers that are perpendicular to the at least one ceramic filter element, the cover having openings, the membrane module having seals provided between the rod ends and openings in the covers, the process comprising:

① forming a blank seal by making an inner opening of the blank seal to a finished size for enclosing one of the rod ends, while an outer surface of the blank seal remains unprocessed;

attaching the inner opening of the blank seal to an attachment region of a holder, the holder having an outer dimension that corresponds to an average outer dimension of the at least one ceramic filter element;

forming a finished seal by processing the outer surface of the blank seal at the attachment region to the holder so that the outer surface attains a nominal size;

attaching the finished seal to at least one of the rod ends;  
and

assembling the attached finished seal into a finished membrane module, wherein the at least one of the rod ends has a smaller dimension diameter than a main region of the at least one ceramic filter element.

[REDACTED]

12. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 11, wherein the at least one of the rod ends is reinforced at least on a surface so that there is no contact between the medium and the finished seal during operation of the membrane module.

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Please cancel claims 13 to 21 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please add the following new claims:

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22. (New) A ceramic filter element comprising:

a main part; and

at least one terminal region, wherein said at least one terminal region has a smaller diameter than said main part.

23. (New) The ceramic filter element of claim 22, further comprising a collar.

24. (New) The ceramic filter element of claim 23, wherein said collar surrounds the ceramic filter element at said at least one terminal region.

25. (New) The ceramic filter element of claim 23, wherein said collar abuts a shoulder defined by said main part and said

at least one terminal region, said shoulder having the ability to take up an axial thrust force that acts upon the ceramic filter element.

26. (New) The ceramic filter element of claim 22, wherein said main part and said at least one terminal region each have a cross-sectional shape selected from the group consisting of circular, oval, hexagonal, and polygonal.

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Cont'd*  
27. (New) The ceramic filter element of claim 22, wherein said main part and said at least one terminal region are rod-shaped.

28. (New) The ceramic filter element of claim 22, wherein said at least one terminal region is a rod end.

29. (New) A membrane module for filtering a medium to at least yield a permeate, comprising:

a plurality of ceramic filter elements being arranged parallel to one another, at least one of said plurality of ceramic filter elements having a main part and at least one terminal region, said at least one terminal region having a smaller diameter than said main part.

30. (New) The membrane module of claim 29, wherein said at least one of said plurality of ceramic filter elements has a cross-sectional shape selected from the group consisting of circular, oval, hexagonal, and polygonal.

31. (New) The membrane module of claim 29, further comprising:

a housing for enclosing said plurality of ceramic filter elements;

*D2  
Cont'd* a collar for surrounding said at least one of said plurality of ceramic filter elements at said at least one terminal region;

a cover being clamped to said at least one terminal region, said cover having a plurality of openings, said cover being perpendicular to said plurality of ceramic filter elements; and

a finished seal being between said at least one terminal region and each of said plurality of openings in said cover.

32. (New) The membrane module of claim 31, wherein said at least one terminal region is reinforced at least on a peripheral edge of said at least one terminal region so that the medium cannot come into contact with said finished seal.

33. (New) The membrane module of claim 31, further comprising a permeate outlet connection arranged on said housing such that an inside space of said housing is completely emptied of the permeate when the membrane module is not in operation.

34. (New) The membrane module of claim 31, wherein said cover has an inner plate and an outer plate, said finished seal being enclosed between said inner plate and said outer plate, a free space being provided radially outside a periphery of said finished seal between said inner plate and said outer plate, said finished seal being reinforced on said periphery such that extension of said finished seal into said free space when said inner plate and said outer plate are clamped together is hindered.

35. (New) The membrane module of claim 30, wherein said collar abuts a shoulder defined by said main part and said at least one terminal region, said shoulder having the ability to take up an axial thrust force that acts upon said plurality of ceramic filter elements.

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